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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Collaboration within the United Nations system on child protection

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/139, provides an overview of collaboration among different actors in the United Nations system in the area of child protection and the results achieved, taking into account information provided by Member States and relevant entities of the United Nations system.

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I. Introduction

1. Violence, abuse and exploitation of children is a global phenomenon, heightened by factors as diverse as poverty, inequality, conflict, discrimination (including gender discrimination), harmful social norms, denial of education, social unrest, economic crises, natural disasters and climate change. Violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation of children take place in all settings, including at home, in schools, in care and justice institutions, in the community and in the workplace. In armed conflict or post-conflict situations, special challenges emerge for the protection of children.

2. The multifaceted nature of child protection requires the engagement of a range of actors with complementary mandates and fields of expertise. Forging partnerships at all levels, these actors work in a mutually reinforcing manner to create and sustain a network of knowledge and cooperation that informs child protection policies and programmes around the world and supports Member States in their efforts to protect and uphold the rights of their youngest citizens.

3. The present report examines collaboration in the area of child protection among major actors in the United Nations system and documents a number of key results achieved.[1] These actors include the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children; specialized agencies and funds; departments and offices of the Secretariat, including six peacekeeping operations with child protection capacity and four special political missions; the Committee on the Rights of the Child; and special procedure mandate holders, in particular the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

II. Key mandates and roles

4. Each of the actors engaged in collaboration on child protection contributes knowledge and expertise that reflect its specific mandate and role in creating a safe and secure environment for children.

5. UNICEF is mandated by the General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.[2] UNICEF is also the lead United Nations agency for child protection. UNICEF is a member of the Global Protection Cluster and chair of its Child Protection Working Group; the lead agency for child protection and

[1] The Governments of Canada, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritania, Slovenia, Thailand and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as well as the European Union provided input for the report. From the United Nations system, inputs were received from FAO, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OHCHR, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, UNICEF, UNRWA and UN-Women.

[2] The General Assembly established UNICEF by resolution 57 (I) of 11 December 1946 and extended its mandate indefinitely by resolution 802 (VIII) of 6 October 1953. The Fund is guided in its work by, inter alia, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

co-lead, with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), of the gender-based violence area of responsibility in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Protection Cluster Working Group; and co-lead of the Standing Committee's education cluster. The contribution of UNICEF to national and international child protection efforts is defined by the organization's child protection strategy,[3] which was approved by the UNICEF Executive Board in 2008.

6. UNICEF has a strong programmatic dimension, with a presence in more than 190 countries, territories and areas. Together with its role in leading country-level child protection clusters, this makes UNICEF a natural partner of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, as well as relevant special procedure mandate holders. UNICEF provides support to field missions, the organization of regional and expert consultations, and the consolidation of national child protection systems.

7. OHCHR is mandated to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all rights established in the Charter of the United Nations and in international human rights laws and treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.[4] OHCHR carries out a range of programmatic activities through its field presences and monitors and reports on human rights violations, including those involving children. OHCHR is also a member of the Global Protection Cluster. In addition, it provides support to the United Nations treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and to the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. For actors engaged in child protection, collaboration with OHCHR is crucial in reinforcing the normative foundation of child protection mandates within the United Nations system and advancing implementation of child rights standards.

8. The mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict was established in 1997 under General Assembly resolution 51/77.[5] As a moral, independent voice, the Special Representative works to protect the rights of all children affected by armed conflict and to engage with parties to conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children. The Special Representative works with intergovernmental bodies, including the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Security Council, as well as with Governments and civil society, to promote global support and secure political and diplomatic engagement to address the situation of children affected by conflict. The Office of the Special Representative also promotes the mainstreaming of protection concerns within the United Nations system and conducts advocacy, on the basis of information on grave violations, to seek accountability. The Special Representative reports annually to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and serves as the secretariat for the preparation of the reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on children and armed conflict. In close cooperation with the

[3] UNICEF document E/ICEF/2008/5/Rev.1.

[4] OHCHR is guided in its work by the mandate provided by General Assembly resolution 48/141, the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent human rights instruments, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights and the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1).

[5] The resolution established the mandate of the Special Representative for a period of three years. The General Assembly has since extended this mandate five times.

Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNICEF, the Special Representative provides support to child protection actors in the field, including through both technical and high-level visits to engage in dialogue with national authorities. The Special Representative works closely with the Departments of Political Affairs and of Peacekeeping Operations in support of the deployment of child protection capacity in field missions.

9. The mandate of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children was established in 2009, as a follow-up to General Assembly resolution 62/141 and the United Nations study on violence against children (see A/61/299 and A/62/209).[6] The Special Representative is a high-profile independent global advocate for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children; and acts as a bridge builder and catalyst of action in all regions and across sectors and settings. Through global initiatives, regional consultations and expert meetings, as well as high-level field missions, the Special Representative mobilizes action and political support to maintain momentum around this agenda and generate concern about the harmful effects of violence on children; promote behavioural and societal change; and achieve progress in implementing the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children. The Special Representative reports annually to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

10. The General Assembly has specifically requested the Special Representative on Violence against Children and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to cooperate and coordinate their activities, bearing in mind their complementarity, so as to ensure that the situations of all children subject to or at risk of violence are addressed, including children affected by armed conflict.[7]

III. Normative framework and global commitments

11. Child protection work in the United Nations system is framed by international human rights instruments and standards, as well as by important political commitments undertaken by the international community to safeguard the rights of the child. This common normative framework helps ensure the consistency and complementary nature of the child protection work carried out by actors within the system. Principal among these instruments and commitments are (a) the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its three Optional Protocols, on the involvement of children in armed conflict; on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and on a communications procedure; (b) ILO conventions, particularly Convention No. 138 concerning the minimum age for admission to employment or work, No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour and No. 189 on decent work for domestic workers; (c) the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; (d) the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; (e) the document entitled "A World Fit for Children",

[6] By its resolution 62/141 of 22 February 2008, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative on violence against children for a period of three years. By its resolution 67/152 of 20 December 2012, the Assembly recommended that the Secretary-General extend the mandate of the Special Representative for a further period of three years.

[7] Resolution 62/141, para. 61.

adopted on 10 May 2002 at the special session of the General Assembly on children (resolution S-27/2, annex) ; (f) the United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2; (g) the Road Map for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016; (h) the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (General Assembly resolution 64/293); and (i) the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2056, No. 35597) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (A/C.1/63/5, enclosure, part II).

12. Key child protection actors in the United Nations system work together to reinforce this normative framework. This includes supporting the drafting of important treaties, most recently the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (General Assembly resolution 66/138, annex) and ILO Convention No. 189. Similar support has been given to the adoption and implementation of other important international standards, including the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems (General Assembly resolution 67/187, annex).

13. Child protection actors within the United Nations system are also engaged in consolidating this normative framework through joint campaigns and initiatives. In this respect, the campaign for universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child is particularly significant. Launched in May 2010 by the Secretary-General, the campaign is supported by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, together with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, OHCHR, UNICEF and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, in addition to other international and regional organizations and civil society partners. The goal of universal ratification is also incorporated in the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Road Map for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016.

14. Results associated with the campaign clearly demonstrate the impact of collaboration among United Nations child protection actors. Since its launch, 26 States have adhered to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, bringing the total number of ratifications to 163. Similarly, 151 States have ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, 19 of them having done so since the launch of the campaign.

15. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, UNICEF and OHCHR have collaborated in supporting the development of new standards on child protection, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. They also advocate for ratification and implementation of such protocols, including through joint initiatives at the global, regional and national levels.

IV. United Nations collaboration on child protection

A. Mechanisms of collaboration among United Nations child protection actors

16. A number of established Headquarters-level mechanisms facilitate effective collaboration on child protection issues within and beyond the United Nations system. Principal among these are the Child Protection Working Group of the Global Protection Cluster, the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism Technical Reference Group and the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children.

17. The Child Protection Working Group is the global forum for coordination and collaboration on child protection in humanitarian settings. It brings together United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, academics and other partners with the objective of ensuring more predictable, accountable and effective child protection responses in emergencies.[8] United Nations entities that participate in the Working Group include the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNHCR and UNICEF. UNICEF is leading an inter-agency initiative on behalf of the Working Group to strengthen programming for child-friendly spaces in emergencies. Its partners include a number of international non-governmental organizations and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings. In 2012, UNICEF helped more than 1.4 million children to obtain safe access to community spaces for socializing, play and learning.

18. The cooperation facilitated by the Working Group is also demonstrated by its close collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in drafting her report on the protection of children from sale and sexual exploitation during humanitarian crises due to natural disasters, which was submitted to the Human Rights Council in March 2012. The Special Rapporteur in turn provided inputs for the drafting of the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, elaborated by the Working Group. Published in November 2012, these are the first agreed-upon standards in the sector. They are the product of collaboration between the Working Group, child protection practitioners, academics and policymakers.

19. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict chairs the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, which at Headquarters level brings together senior managers from a range of United Nations entities. This ensures broad consultation and system-wide coherence on issues relating to children and armed conflict, particularly the monitoring of and reporting on grave violations against children. Membership of the Task Force includes the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs, Department of Field Support, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of Legal Affairs, OHCHR, the Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA, the United Nations

[8] For further information see http://cpwg.net/.

Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), UNHCR, ILO and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

20. This Task Force is the coordinating body for consultations on information for inclusion in the Secretary-General's annual reports to the Security Council prepared by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, including emerging issues of concern. Besides headquarters-based coordination, a country monitoring and reporting task force is established at field level in cases foreseen by resolution 1612 (2005). Together with UNICEF, the Special Representative also chairs the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism Technical Reference Group, which is tasked with compiling technical guidance in support of the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

21. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children is a strategic platform for consultation, policy formulation and mainstreaming of concerns related to violence against children within the United Nations system. Chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Working Group brings together all child-related agencies — including OHCHR, UNICEF, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Health Organization (WHO), ILO and UN-Women — in a single forum. In 2012, for example, cooperation among the partners informed the organization of expert consultations on data and research on violence against children, on protection from violence in the justice system and on protection of children from harmful practices. In 2013, cooperation within the Working Group was critical for informing the expert consultation on restorative justice for children.[9] This cooperation is equally promoted at the field level with United Nations country teams.

22. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children also participates in other coordination forums to mainstream children's protection from violence in the United Nations agenda. These include the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice; the Violence Prevention Alliance, which brings together WHO member States, international agencies, academia and civil society organizations; the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous People's Issues; and the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development; as well as the Global Forum on Law, Justice and Development, promoted under the auspices of the World Bank. This engagement has contributed to supporting United Nations research on violence against indigenous girls and informing decisions of United Nations bodies to develop new standards. This included the recent resolution of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice concerning model strategies and practical measures on the elimination of violence against children in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice.[10]

23. With respect to trafficking, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons brings together 16 member agencies, six of which also participate in its working group, including UNICEF and OHCHR.

24. In another area of child protection, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development and ILO are founding members of the International Partnership for Cooperation on

[9] See A/HRC/22/55, paras. 29-31 and 34-36, respectively.

[10] See E/2013/30, chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution V.

Child Labour in Agriculture, which also includes the International Food Policy Research Institute and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations. This partnership facilitates collaboration among United Nations agencies, furthers international cooperation and promotes joint work with agricultural and labour stakeholders at the national level to tackle the multifaceted human rights and development challenges of child labour in agriculture.

25. In addition to these formal mechanisms, United Nations child protection actors engage regularly with Member States to strategize around child protection challenges. Key actors in the area of child protection, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, OHCHR and UNICEF, also meet regularly to review priorities, strengthen collaboration and discuss specific initiatives. This informal collaboration has translated into the organization of joint United Nations panel discussions and common positions on issues of common concern.

B. Cooperation in the context of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Council

26. An important means of collaboration on child protection issues is engagement with the human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms, particularly the Committee on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF is a key interlocutor with this Committee, as recognized by article 45 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and engages with the Committee by submitting reports, sending representatives to the pre-sessional working groups and sessions and supporting follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children also cooperate closely with the Committee, including in the framework of the concluding observations, which provide a reference for field missions. The concluding observations also incorporate the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children and cooperation with the Special Representative as a standing section.

27. In preparing its general comments, the Committee benefits from support from child protection actors in the United Nations system, including OHCHR, UNICEF and the Special Representative. This includes general comment No. 13 on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence; No. 15 on the right of the child to the highest attainable standard of health; No. 16 on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on child rights; and No. 17 on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts.

28. The Human Rights Council offers another important forum for cooperation among child protection actors. During its annual day of discussion on the rights of the child, thematic panels bring together a range of actors on child protection, including UNICEF, the Special Representative and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

29. In a significant collaboration, in March 2011 the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Special Representative presented to the Council a joint report on child-sensitive counselling,

complaint and reporting mechanisms (A/HRC/16/56). In addition to providing guidance on establishment of these mechanisms by law, the report constituted an important reference for the ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communication procedure. Subsequently, in September 2012, the Human Rights Council received a report on the prevention of and responses to violence against children within the juvenile justice system jointly prepared by OHCHR, UNODC and the Special Representative (A/HRC/21/25). This report built on a joint consultation held in Austria in January 2012.

30. The annual meeting of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council provides a valuable opportunity to enhance collaboration between these independent human rights mechanisms and other child protection actors. The general comment adopted by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances on the protection of children from disappearances, with the collaboration of the Special Representative, illustrates the potential of this partnership (A/HRC/WGEID/98/1).

31. Relevant thematic mandates of the special procedures also systematically request inputs from other United Nations actors involved in promoting and protecting child rights in drafting thematic reports. Furthermore, they collaborate closely with these actors before, during and after official country visits. To take one example, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery has collaborated closely with ILO, UNFPA and UNICEF in preparing various thematic reports that focus on children, such as her reports on domestic servitude, including child domestic servitude; child slavery in mines and quarries; and servile marriages, including forced child marriage. The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery has also worked closely with UNDP, UNHCR and UNICEF in preparing and conducting missions.

C. Advocacy, awareness raising and outreach

32. Actors engaged in different aspects of child protection frequently come together to strengthen synergies in advocacy, awareness raising and outreach.

33. There are a number of global initiatives to raise awareness of the issue of violence against children and to promote action at the regional and national levels. For example, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, United Nations entities have come together to promote the UNiTE campaign to end violence against women and girls. Launched in 2008, this campaign calls upon all Governments and key actors to join forces in promoting elements of a protection system at the national level. This includes adoption and implementation of legal and policy frameworks and establishment of data collection and monitoring systems to inform policy development and programme implementation.[11]

34. Advocacy is also a key component of the campaign for ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children — in cooperation with OHCHR, UNICEF, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and a wide network of regional organizations and civil society actors — promotes

[11] For further information see http://endviolence.un.org/.

advocacy for ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. Advocacy has been supported by the adoption of regional political commitments towards this same goal and the promotion of child-friendly materials to mobilize and empower young people. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, OHCHR and UNICEF work in concert on the "Zero under 18" campaign to promote ratification of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict; raise awareness of States parties' obligation to criminalize recruitment and use of persons under the age of 18 years; and promote adoption and implementation of relevant national legislation.

35. There have also been concerted efforts to raise awareness of the impact of explosive weapons on children. This issue has been addressed in the 2012 report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the General Assembly (A/67/256) and in the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2012/376), both of which make recommendations for action to mitigate the damage caused by such weapons. The Office of the Special Representative, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNICEF organized an event in February 2013 that included the African Union and the Permanent Mission of Norway in raising awareness of the impact of explosive weapons in populated areas, with a special focus on children.

36. The Office of the Special Representative, in partnership with UNICEF and the Government of France, has also organized annual forums to promote the Paris Principles and Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups. These provide guidelines on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children recruited or used in conflict situations.

37. Child participation represents another important area where the impact of coordinated advocacy and awareness-raising has borne fruit. Promotion of child participation by United Nations child protection actors in turn empowers children themselves to advocate for their rights globally and draws attention to their exposure to violence, abuse and exploitation. In the context of the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, children and young people have participated in regional consultations, informed thematic reports and contributed to the forthcoming global survey on violence against children.

38. Regional mechanisms for child protection also offer important platforms for child participation. In many regions, Governments, United Nations actors (principally UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children) and civil society organizations have worked with children to formally adopt regional and national declarations and manifestos that define their commitment to prevention of violence against children and set out actions towards that end. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in consultation with child protection partners, has facilitated the participation of former child soldiers at United Nations meetings and other forums. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography has submitted a report to the General Assembly on child participation as a key element in preventing and combating the sale and

sexual exploitation of children, incorporating inputs from various United Nations entities, in particular UNICEF.

39. Child protection actors regularly engage in joint panel events, share common platforms and issue joint press releases to engender the most effective media outreach for child protection issues. This is evident, for example, in the joint statement requesting an end to child marriage issued by eight human rights mechanisms[12] to mark the first International Day of the Girl Child on 11 October 2012.

D. Law reform to safeguard children from violence, exploitation and abuse

40. Law reform to prevent violence, exploitation and abuse, ensure children's protection, hold perpetrators to account and, where necessary, provide for children's rehabilitation is an essential component of a robust national child protection system. To advance implementation of international child protection standards, United Nations actors strongly advocate for adoption of a clear prohibition of all forms of violence against children in national legislation. Since submission of the United Nations study on violence against children in 2006, the number of countries with a comprehensive legal ban on violence against children has more than doubled, from 16 to 34. Promotion of law reform has been a priority for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children since the establishment of the mandate. Technical support to Member States on law reform has also been provided in cooperation with OHCHR and UNICEF. Progress resulting from this collaboration is well illustrated by developments in Peru: Law 29719 on promoting a life free from violence in educational institutions was adopted in 2010, a national plan of action on childhood and adolescence for 2012-2021 has been approved, and a new code on children and adolescents is pending final approval.

41. To learn from recent experiences and further advance law reform, in July 2011, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, OHCHR, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the NGO Advisory Council for follow-up to the United Nations study on violence against children co-organized an expert consultation on this topic.[13] In follow-up, a number of legislative reforms have been undertaken, including in Brazil, Peru, the Philippines, Indonesia and Maldives.

42. Legislative reform is a crucial element of a system-wide approach to child protection. This is clearly demonstrated in the case of harmful practices and, in particular, efforts to end the practice of female genital mutilation. The UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme on female genital mutilation is focusing on accelerating the abandonment of the practice by addressing social norms. In the 15 African

[12] Committee on the Rights of the Child; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children; Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; Special Rapporteur on violence against women; Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; and Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice.

[13] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/knowledge/law_reform.

countries covered by the programme, over 10,000 communities have declared their commitment to end female genital mutilation to date, and they are taking steps to implement their commitments through local advocacy, community-level monitoring and the development of alternative economic opportunities for former cutters.

43. Child protection actors in the United Nations system are simultaneously working to ensure that these community-based activities are complemented by policy development, advocacy, communication initiatives and legislative measures tailored to prohibit the practice. In 2012, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and Plan International issued a study on protecting children from harmful practices in plural legal systems, which was informed by an international expert consultation in Ethiopia (see A/67/230, paras. 17-20). This study was released on the first international Day of the Girl Child and had a special focus on the interplay between children's right to protection from violence and customary and religious laws. The research benefited from close cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, OHCHR, UNICEF and UN-Women, as well as the African Union, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the International NGO Council on Violence against Children. Recommendations from this thematic report informed the 2013 commemoration of the Day of the African Child.

E. Information gathering, mapping, data collection and research

44. The growing body of knowledge on the most effective responses to complex child protection challenges owes much to collaboration in the context of field missions, mapping exercises, data collection and research.

45. Close cooperation among child protection actors is a key dimension of preparation and execution of field missions. For example, in April 2013, UNHCR and UNICEF conducted a joint mission on child protection to Lebanon and Jordan to explore how country-level child protection cooperation in the Syrian refugee emergency could inform global discussions involving UNHCR and UNICEF on a strengthened partnership to reduce the risks faced by refugee children.

46. Conducting joint country visits has become standard practice for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF. In 2012, joint missions were undertaken to Myanmar, South Sudan and Yemen, and UNICEF collaborated closely with the Special Representative in a mission to the Syrian Arab Republic. In May 3013, UNICEF and the Special Representative conducted a successful joint mission to Chad to promote and support the implementation of an action plan to end recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. A 10-point road map to achieve full compliance with the action plan was adopted, identifying the short- and medium-term measures to be implemented by the Chadian authorities with the assistance of the UNICEF Chad country office.

47. Cooperation has also developed in the context of fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry emanating from the Human Rights Council, the Secretary-General and the Security Council and supported by OHCHR and those deployed under its mandate. OHCHR and the Special Representative are working closely to ensure that fact-finding and investigation missions supported by OHCHR include child protection specialists through the secondment of child protection advisors identified by the Office of the Special Representative. For example, the 2011

commission of inquiry on Côte d'Ivoire, as well as those on the Syrian Arab Republic and Mali in 2012, included an officer seconded by the Office of the Special Representative.

48. In situations where armed forces and groups are listed in the annexes to the annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on children and armed conflict, UNICEF (and, where deployed, United Nations field presences) have established country-level monitoring and reporting mechanisms to provide timely and reliable information on grave violations against children.[14] Such mechanisms are managed by country task forces co-chaired by UNICEF and the highest United Nations representative in the country; in mission settings, the task force is co-chaired by UNICEF and the head of the mission.

49. The information gathered on grave violations committed against children is transmitted periodically by the co-chairs of the task force to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for final vetting and review. It is also included in country-specific reports and in the annual report of the Secretary-General. This mechanism allows for joint analysis of violations at the country level and the development of joint responses to end grave violations against children and improve protection of children affected by armed conflict. Together, UNICEF, the Special Representative, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs work to develop the tools, guidelines, training materials and information management systems necessary to strengthen the mechanism. In certain settings, UNICEF, OHCHR and the Special Representative have collaborated to develop and implement projects, some financed by the Peacebuilding Fund, to monitor implementation of compliance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), including through national action plans with government authorities.

50. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs and UNICEF are also collaborating closely to develop three important technical documents on the monitoring and reporting mechanism: the guidelines and field manual, the training modules and the compilation of good practices. Furthermore, the Special Representative and UNICEF work together to provide coordinated support to country offices and task forces, including for the preparation of action plans involving the United Nations and parties to conflict, which aim to stop and prevent grave human rights violations against children. Action plans of this kind have been signed in 20 situations, including the Central African Republic and Chad in 2011 and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia and South Sudan in 2012.

51. The Special Representative has produced working papers that bring conceptual clarity to key conflict-related child protection issues. These include children and justice during and in the aftermath of conflict; the rights and guarantees of internally displaced children in armed conflict (together with the Office of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons); and the legal foundation for the six grave violations against children during armed conflict. These papers have been developed in close consultation with relevant

[14] In line with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to establish such mechanisms.

partners, and feedback confirms that they are important resources for the child protection community.

52. United Nations actors recognize the crucial importance of compiling an evidence base to inform effective child protection policies and programmes, monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of child protection interventions. They work together to support the improvement of national data collection systems and to promote research at the national level. Data and research on violence against children is a key priority for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, and it has been high on the agenda of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children. The Special Representative joined UNICEF and OHCHR in releasing the significant UNICEF report on child disciplinary practices at home (available from www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58022.html), which gathered evidence from 35 low- and middle-income countries, comprising around 10 per cent of the child population in the developing world.

53. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, together with the Government of Sweden, also organized an expert consultation on improving data and research on violence against children in 2011, with the support of ILO, UNICEF, UNODC and WHO and the participation of Member States and civil society partners.[15] The Special Representative also works with key United Nations and other partners to promote national surveys on violence against children in all Member States. Of particular note are the surveys developed by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and UNICEF as part of the "Together for Girls" initiative.[16] These were undertaken in collaboration with the Governments of Cambodia, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Further studies are planned for 2013-2014.

54. In 2011/12, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in collaboration with a wide range of child protection partners, conducted an important global survey to assess progress in preventing and eliminating violence against children. The United Nations system has been a major source of information for this survey. Inputs have been received from UNICEF (including 116 country office annual reports), UNODC, OHCHR, ILO and WHO, among others. Over 100 Member States contributed to the survey, which was also informed by inputs from regional consultations organized by the Special Representative, including consultations with children, and submissions by regional organizations. The survey has also benefited from inputs from international monitoring processes, including the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council and reporting to the human rights treaty bodies. The survey builds on partnerships across mandates through cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The findings of the survey, to be published in 2013, will constitute a critical

[15] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/knowledge/data_and_research.

[16] The "Together for Girls" initiative brings multilateral partners (UNICEF, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNFPA, UN-Women and WHO) together with private sector and government partners.

resource for assessing and promoting progress in children's protection from violence around the world.

55. Other important mapping and data collection exercises taking place around the world build on the respective strengths and mandates of United Nations entities engaged in child protection activities. For example, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is collaborating with the UNICEF regional office for the Middle East and North Africa to map child protection activities with a view to strengthening its approach in this area. Findings from this mapping will be used to inform the UNRWA child protection strategy and strengthen linkages among existing child protection tools and mechanisms in the Agency.

56. In 2012, global attention was focused on the magnitude of child marriage around the world, in part through the synergies generated by the selection of "Ending child marriage" as the theme for the first International Day of the Girl Child. UNICEF published new data on child marriage, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children released a study on children's protection from harmful practices, and data on the minimum legal age of marriage for 195 countries were compiled and published as a wall chart by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Research on harmful practices along with experience garnered by actors in the United Nations system in addressing the practice of female genital mutilation, point to the potential of working with communities to encourage the abandonment of social norms that support child marriage.

57. ILO and UNICEF both support data collection on the extent, characteristics and determinants of child labour through the ILO Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour and the UNICEF multiple indicator cluster surveys. According to a 2010 report, "Accelerating action against child labour",[17] ILO has supported more than 300 child labour surveys since 1998, 66 of which have been national in scope. As of April 2013, UNICEF has supported the collection of nationally representative data on child labour through more than 250 multiple indicator cluster surveys since 2000. "Understanding children's work", an inter-agency research cooperation programme that brings together ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank, contributes to defining measurement criteria, including thresholds for unpaid hazardous household services.

58. All United Nations actors engaged in child protection organize and participate in national, regional and global meetings and conferences where new research findings are discussed and the most effective approaches to child protection are shared. For example, the continued knowledge leadership of UNICEF in systems strengthening is demonstrated by the role it plays in convening partners and building global consensus among leading regional and global academics, practitioners and decision makers. In November 2012, UNICEF and UNHCR came together with Save the Children and World Vision to host an international conference in India entitled "A better way to protect all children", at which key international stakeholders — including ILO; OHCHR; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children; the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; civil society organizations;

[17] Available from www.ilo.org/declaration/lang--en/index.htm.

non-governmental organizations; and national Governments — examined and shared the most recent global learning on a systems approach to addressing violence, abuse and exploitation of children.

F. Capacity-building and technical assistance

59. In keeping with their mandates and specific areas of expertise, United Nations actors engaged in child protection are involved in a wide range of initiatives to build the capacity of and offer technical assistance to national institutions and authorities working with and for children in Member States across all regions.

60. Children who live in informal or formal foster care or in residential care or who are otherwise separated from their parents are among those most vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation. UNICEF and the Committee on the Rights of the Child were two of the key United Nations actors involved in developing the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, which were formally welcomed by the General Assembly in 2009 (see resolution 64/142). Since then, work has continued to ensure that the Guidelines are implemented in legislation, policy and practice. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children promotes implementation of the Guidelines as part of her agenda, and the Committee on the Rights of the Child regularly draws the attention of Member States to the Guidelines in its concluding observations. A handbook, "Moving forward: implementing the guidelines for the alternative care of children" (available from www.alternativecareguidelines.org), has been developed and launched to aid Governments in implementing them. Child-friendly and staff-friendly versions have also been produced.

61. Increasingly Member States are using the Guidelines to inform their policies, legislation and practice. In Indonesia, for example, the child protection system is moving towards preventing the admission of children to alternative care settings; in Mexico over 1,000 staff, including local government providers, have received training in the Guidelines; and in Moldova, the Guidelines have informed both policy and legislation.

62. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General works closely with strategic United Nations partners to build capacity and offer technical assistance. Recognizing the importance of child participation in addressing child protection concerns, The Special Representative and UNICEF are working with Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision and a number of national non-governmental organizations to develop a toolkit and conceptual framework for monitoring and evaluating children's participation. The Special Representative has also organized expert consultations and issued thematic reports with policy recommendations on a range of key topics. These have included safe and child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms on violence against children, organized jointly with OHCHR and informing the joint report prepared by the Special Representative and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; data and research on violence against children; violence in schools; violence against children within the juvenile justice system; protection of children from harmful practices in plural legal systems; and, together with UNICEF, violence against children in early childhood and data and research on violence against children. In close cooperation with United Nations partners,

including OHCHR, UNODC, UNICEF and United Nations country teams, the Special Representative also pursues bilateral cooperation with individual Member States to enhance national capacities to address specific areas of concern. These have included law reform to ban all forms of violence against children and initiatives to safeguard children from violence in the home, the community and the justice system. These are also critical concerns promoted by the Special Representative through country visits conducted in all regions.

63. Special procedure mandate holders whose mandates are relevant to child protection also offer technical assistance to Member States and share expertise, particularly in the context of official country visits. Through the conclusions and recommendations in her reports, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography offers guidance to Member States in implementing integrated child protection systems. Follow-up to these recommendations is ensured through coordination with United Nations country teams, and UNICEF country offices in particular. The Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography also joined a wide range of child protection actors in May 2012 in Dakar to share regional lessons on child protection system interventions, in the context of the regional conference on strengthening child protection systems in Africa. It was hosted by the African Child Policy Forum, Terre des Hommes, Plan International, the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative, the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Inter-Agency Task Team on Children and AIDS, Save the Children, World Vision International and UNICEF, with support from the Oak Foundation and others.

64. Training programmes also represent an important opportunity for strategic cooperation and collaboration around child protection issues. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF implemented a joint training course for all partners working on the monitoring and reporting mechanism in the Central African Republic, as well as regional training courses in Jordan, Nepal and Senegal. They were also involved in an expert consultation, organized in collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, on core pre-deployment training material on child protection for military personnel deployed in United Nations peacekeeping operations. The training is being updated by the Department, together with the Special Representative, UNICEF and other key child protection partners. The Special Representative and the Department have designed a child protection training jointly with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; similar initiatives are envisioned with the African Union.

65. FAO contributes to an annual training course hosted at the ILO International Training Centre in Italy with the aim of developing the knowledge of participants concerning child labour in agriculture. It also aims to build their capacity to reduce the incidence of child labour in these sectors. In Malawi, FAO and ILO support capacity-building workshops to raise awareness of child labour in agriculture and strengthen stakeholder coordination. They work in tandem to support the Government of Malawi in better integrating child labour issues into its policy development plans and programmes, developing staff capacity to address child labour and strengthening the involvement of agricultural stakeholders in child labour committees.

66. In June 2013, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children joined with the South Asian Initiative to End Violence against Children and the ILO International Training Centre to organize a course entitled "The Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO child labour conventions: Towards greater coherence in reporting and action". This capacity-building programme provided training on United Nations and ILO standards relevant to protecting children from violence for government officials in South Asia, as well as representatives from civil society and workers' and employers' organizations. The course explored opportunities at regional and national levels to create synergies among the various monitoring, reporting and planning mechanisms, and elaborated inputs to a South Asia child labour strategy, to be shared at the Third Global Conference on Child Labour in Brazil in October 2013.

G. Regional partnerships for child protection

67. To promote child rights, child protection actors have also forged strategic partnerships beyond the United Nations system. Cooperation with regional organizations is of particular importance since they represent the interests and concerns of Member States.

68. In line with the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to foster international cooperation and ensure respect for children's rights, the Office has developed partnerships with a range of regional organizations. These partnerships have contributed, for example, to the adoption of the European Union guidelines on children and armed conflict, which provide a toolkit for European Union delegations on engaging with host Governments, parties to conflict and others on issues related to children and armed conflict. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General is also engaged in further strengthening partnerships with the African Union to integrate child protection issues in the areas of prevention, advocacy, response and monitoring of grave violations against children during armed conflict. In 2012, the Special Representative initiated a dialogue with the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference with the aim of exploring opportunities to strengthen cooperation.

69. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children promotes the institutionalization of regional partnerships to mobilize support and action to prevent violence and protect children around the world. Through these efforts, regional cooperation frameworks to promote national follow-up to the United Nations study on violence against children have been established in seven regions, with more in the process of development.[18] Moreover, two high-level round tables were organized with regional organizations around the General Assembly debate on the rights of the child to promote cross-fertilization of positive

[18] These include the League of Arab States, the South Asian Initiative to End Violence against Children, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations through its Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, the Caribbean Community, the Southern Common Market, Central American countries (Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic), the Council of Europe and the European Union, as well as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. More information can be found in the report of the Special Representative to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/22/55).

experiences among Member States.[19] Considerable progress has been achieved, with the adoption of significant political commitments to prevent and address violence against children in eight regions, including the European Union's guidelines on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child and its strategy on violence against children. Together with regional organizations, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General organized six regional consultations to promote implementation of the study's recommendations and establish regional mechanisms to advance and monitor progress. In collaboration with the Special Representative, four regional studies were issued with key findings from this process, and the Special Representative issued a publication with the most significant political commitments adopted by regional organizations and institutions to prevent and address violence against children.

V. Conclusions

70. Key child protection stakeholders in the United Nations system operate in a well-coordinated manner in keeping with their distinct but complementary mandates. As the present report illustrates, this collaboration has led to the development of important synergies among these actors. As understanding of the complexities of child protection has grown, child protection actors have promoted holistic, multi-partner and multi-sectoral responses to child protection issues. These responses range from reinforcing international standards to supporting comprehensive policy and legal reform processes; engaging in research and data collection; monitoring violations of children's rights; designing preventive strategies; supporting child protection capacity-building among States; ensuring accountability; and promoting positive social and behavioural change in communities. To this end, dynamic partnerships have developed among human rights bodies and mechanisms and normative and operational United Nations organs with a decentralized field presence. This has paved the way for mutually supportive initiatives that are central to achieving progress in protecting children from violence, abuse and exploitation, including in armed conflict.

71. Child protection actors in the United Nations system continue to strengthen collaboration around the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, including the right to protection from violence, abuse and exploitation. Ongoing collaboration at the strategic, programmatic and operational levels is crucial to support the efforts of Member States in realizing the rights of all of their children. This calls, in turn, for the continued provision of sustained, adequate resources and support for the work of child protection actors in the United Nations system to consolidate and build upon the important progress achieved.

72. By means of existing reporting mechanisms — including annual reports to the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Security Council and the annual interactive dialogue with Member States in the context of the Third Committee — these actors, in accordance with their respective mandates, will continue to provide detailed and comprehensive information on activities, partnerships, results, future activities and the collaboration they undertake on child protection within the United Nations system.

[19] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/video/2011-10-11_396 and http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/story/2012-10-19_570.